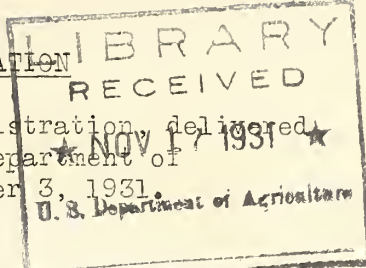


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A radio talk by J. O. Clarke, Federal Food and Drug Administration, delivered through WRC and 44 other associate NBC stations, during the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, November 3, 1931.

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I am sure that all of you listening today are interested in the pure food laws of this country; that you want these laws to be effectively enforced. Many of you know about the Federal food and drugs act, popularly called the pure food law, and you doubtless are familiar in a general way with the various State and City food laws and ordinances.

Some 30 years ago scientists and certain other influential people, led by the late Dr. Harvey W. Wiley, campaigned vigorously for legislation looking toward control of the purity of food on American markets. These pioneers provided our law-makers with accurate, scientific data showing the danger to the public from impure foods. Acting on this information, Congress and the various State Legislatures enacted laws to protect the American consumer from impure foods. The influence of these laws reaches every single one of you. With the exception of the small amount of food grown and consumed at home, every mouthful which you eat has had the benefit of being regulated by some kind of pure-food law.

We take it for granted, and properly so, that our foods are pure. Most of us rarely, if ever, inquire into the means employed by State, city, or Federal officials in bringing about the purity of food consumed by the American public.

Now the personnel engaged in pure-food work includes inspectors, bacteriologists, chemists, and administrative officers. But I want to talk about the chemist today, since the meeting of the Association of Official Agricultural Chemists brings many prominent food and other agricultural chemists to Washington. The official chemist's duty is to examine samples of food to find out if they are pure and truthfully labeled. In most instances, you can't determine for yourself whether or not your food is pure. The pure food laws place at your disposal the skill of chemists who are spending their professional life in studying the chemistry of food.

The every-day work of these chemists and other scientific workers is usually done on large lots of food long before they reach the ultimate consumer. The chemist, or other scientific worker, daily is called on to answer such questions as -- has a certain carload of milk been produced under sanitary conditions, has it been watered or, perhaps, skimmed? This is but one example. Our chemists and bacteriologists count the bacteria, to find out if the milk has been produced under sanitary conditions; they determine the refractive index, or the freezing point, to find out if the milk has been watered; they determine the amount of fat to discover if the milk has been skimmed. This information enables the food official, who is frequently an experienced food chemists or bacteriologist, to apply the food laws to this particular lot of milk for the protection of the consumer. Does the shipload of coffee which docked at the port yesterday meet the high standard required by the law? The chemist at the port of entry knows, because he has made a scientific examination of the coffee. What about flour, canned vegetables, bread and butter, hundreds of other foods? The chemists employed by the city, State or Federal government get precise facts about these things to the end that you can get pure food, truthfully labeled.

Science does not stand still, but continually moves forward -- particularly as it relates to foods. Today's scientific methods give way tomorrow to better methods. Many forms of food adulteration now being practiced are difficult to detect and yield only to the application of the most modern principles of science. So the food chemist employed in official laboratories must be progressive and must have a background of sound scientific knowledge and training. His work must be accurate and reliable. Pure food laws, and capable chemists who participate in their enforcement, make for a square deal both to the consuming public and the industry.

Industry, itself, is using science in the study and analysis of our food supply and this helps to make it possible to maintain the high quality demanded by the American people. The scientific control afforded by official agencies compels the small minority of food manufacturers who would attempt to market inferior and impure foods to fall in line with the more progressive competitors and supply the American people with the purest food of any nation on earth.

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